

Later in the session a compromise was reached and the North Carolina Railroad Company was chartered with the State subscribing \$2,000,000 and private individuals \$1,000,000. The Railroad went from Goldsboro to Raleigh, Hillsboro, Greensboro, Salisbury, Concord, and Charlotte. "The 223-mile railroad was opened to trains in January, 1856—the greatest enterprise in which the government of North Carolina had ever participated."<sup>53</sup> It was the "Danville Scheme," introduced by Ellis, which frightened the East into compromising with the West to give the people a North Carolina system of railroads.

Dorothea L. Dix of Boston, who had championed the cause for proper care of the insane throughout the United States, arrived in North Carolina in 1848. Miss Dix spent several weeks investigating the care provided for the mentally ill in the State. She found, as she did in other States, deplorable conditions for the care of these pitiful creatures. It was estimated that there were more than 1,000 such persons in North Carolina in 1848. She found them confined in jails, dungeons, and county poor-houses, though most of them were confined in the dwellings of private families, without proper medical care to help reinstate them into society. The more fortunate ones were sent to institutions outside the State.<sup>54</sup>

After her examination of the facilities for the care of the insane in this State, Miss Dix prepared a memorial to be presented to the legislature urging them to construct an asylum. She was informed by many people that her cause was hopeless, because the Democrats had no desire to spend money; and the Whigs had no desire even to discuss the problem during the present session of the legislature.

Miss Dix would not be dismayed by what appeared to be insurmountable obstacles. Early one morning, a few days after the legislature had convened, she called the leading Democrats to the Mansion House where she was staying. "Gentlemen," she said, "here is the document I have prepared for your Assembly. I desire you, sir, to present it," giving the document to John W. Ellis, whom she called a "Democrat popular with his party," and turning to the other members of the astonished delegation, she said, "and you, gentlemen, you, I expect, will sustain the motion this gentleman will make to print the same."<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>Lefler and Newsome, *North Carolina*, 349.

<sup>54</sup>Helen E. Marshall, *Dorothea Dix, Forgotten Samaritan* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1937), 116, hereinafter cited as Marshall, *Dorothea Dix*.

<sup>55</sup>Marshall, *Dorothea Dix*, 117.